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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001016

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN SEASON BEGINS WITH VIOLENCE

REF: A. 08 MAPUTO 126
[B](#). 08 MAPUTO 124
[C](#). 08 MAPUTO 120

Classified By: A/DCM Matthew Roth, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The official start of campaigning for the October 28 national elections was marred by violence, largely by supporters of ruling party FRELIMO against the opposition. The Catholic church--accused of supporting the opposition--has expressed concern about intimidation tactics against the church and has cautioned that inter-party clashes could increase. Opposition party leaders have told Emboffs that FRELIMO militants regularly and openly harass them at campaign events, while the police do not intervene. A respected academic suggests that underlying socioeconomic frustrations, coupled with events during the campaign, could set the stage for broader-based violence. International partners and civil society have publicly appealed for calm. While clashes during elections are commonplace in Mozambique, the frustrations seem sharper this year than in the past, making credible the predictions of our contacts that violence could become more widespread. The U.S. mission is conducting basic emergency preparedness planning and reviewing tripwires. END SUMMARY.

CAMPAIGN TURNS BLOODY ON THE FIRST DAY

[1](#)2. (SBU) The campaign season for the October 28 national elections began on September 13, with violence reported in Gaza, Maputo, Nampula, Sofala, and Tete provinces. Incidents in Gaza Province, s Chokwe and Mabalane, as well as in Tete Province received significant media coverage. According to news reports, FRELIMO youths attacked a local Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) opposition party office in Chokwe tearing down the party flag, breaking windows, and ransacking the building, injuring three MDM delegates in the process. Press reports identified the perpetrators as the son of the Mayor of Chokwe town, the local FRELIMO secretary, and the secretary, s son. In the district of Mabalane, FRELIMO party faithful allegedly attacked suspected members of MDM in their homes. Domestic observer group the Center for Public Integrity (CIP) received information from Changara in Tete Province, an area plagued by ballot stuffing in the 2004 election, stating that 20 FRELIMO faithful attacked and burned a RENAMO party building and three houses belonging to RENAMO members. The police have not detained anyone in these three separate incidents. FRELIMO party spokesman Edson Macuacua denied any party involvement in these incidents.

CATHOLIC CHURCH WARNS OF CLASHES

13. (C) In late August, Archbishop of Beira Dom Jaime Goncalves described to the Charge an environment of pressure and fear among the populace that reflects poorly on the ruling party. Goncalves explained that the Catholic Church in Beira, long suspected of supporting the opposition, has seen its local radio station go for months without electricity, something which other pro-government radio stations in the area have not experienced. Goncalves said he worried that ruling-party meddling may incite larger-scale violence between political parties during the campaign season. Goncalves indicated he remains concerned about the increasingly partisan stance of the GRM, in which the entrenched power is increasingly more willing to use political and economic pressure to defeat political foes. The Archbishop warned that violence and manipulation of the election were not out of the question for the ruling party.

RENAMO COMPLAINS OF HARRASSMENT

14. (C) RENAMO representatives have complained in recent weeks to Embassies that campaign stops suffer endless threats and confrontations -- revving motors, playing musical instruments, and shouting to drown out party leader Afonso Dhlakama's speeches; as well as more serious incidents of stone-throwing and other violent provocations--none of which plague FRELIMO--while police and other GRM forces do not intervene. FRELIMO demonstrators killed a RENAMO activist at a rally on September 1 in the town of Milange.

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MDM SEES UNSAFE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

15. (C) On August 26, opposition MDM party leader Daviz Simango was surrounded by an angry crowd in Gaza Province, in what he described as a tense situation, however he escaped unhurt. In the same conversation with the Charge on August 29, Simango noted that he now travels by road with 20 bodyguards, however all of them are unarmed. Simango confirmed that he is harassed at every stop, and called for the international community to make a strong statement on the need to avoid violence during the campaign, but warned that he feared more was likely.

ACADEMIC PREDICTS SOCIAL UNREST IS EXPLOSIVE

16. (C) MDM sympathizer and academic Joao Perreira told Poloffs on September 8 that the ingredients for social unrest are "like an atomic bomb" ready to blow up. These ingredients include massive poverty, unemployment, regional divisions, religious divisions, ethnic divisions, and a growing sense of social exclusion between FRELIMO-faithful and the remaining "have nots." Perreira, referring to the shrinking space for civil society, explained that with few formal channels to voice frustrations these divisions could easily be manipulated by local political elites, resulting in violence.

INTERNATIONAL APPEALS FOR CALM

17. (C) On September 15, the international donor community (including the USG) jointly issued a public appeal for peaceful campaigning by political parties. Civil society groups, including religious leaders, have also publicly made statements for calm and the avoidance of violence. In the latest spate of violence the GRM and FRELIMO have been silent.

COMMENT: MORE VIOLENCE IS CERTAIN, BUT HOW MUCH?

18. (C) Isolated cases of party-on-party violence are a regular staple of elections in Mozambique. Some factors have changed, however, that make it more difficult to say whether it will remain limited as in the past, or if conflict could become more widespread. The appearance of MDM as a viable opposition party has energized some sectors of society. Its sudden and poorly explained disqualification from many legislative races has lent credence to the perception of an unfair playing field tilted in favor of FRELIMO. Coupled with continuing frustrations about unresolved social and economic challenges that bubbled up into riots in February 2008 (reftels), the scenarios for broader unrest--as suggested by our contacts--are more credible. The U.S. mission is conducting basic emergency preparedness planning, reviewing tripwires, and will hold an EAC meeting early next week to review events and preparations.

CHAPMAN